





MODERN POPERY:

ITS STRENGTH, AND ITS WEAKNESS,

AS AN

AGGRESSIVE POWER.

A LECTURE,

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE ISLINGTON PROTESTANT
INSTITUTE,

AT THE CHAPEL-OF-EASE PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS, LIVERPOOL-ROAD,
ON MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1852.

BY THE

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RECTOR OF KELSHALL, HERTS.

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RULES OF THE ISLINGTON PROTESTANT INSTITUTE.

I. That this Society be called "THE ISLINGTON PROTESTANT INSTITUTE."

II. That the objects of the Society be, to awaken the attention of Protestant Christians to the progress of Popery ; to call forth and unite their energies in opposing it ; to form a rallying point, as well for the defence and promotion of Protestant truth, as for the maintenance of the Protestant principles of the Constitution ; and to aim at the conversion of Romanists to the truth and liberty of the Gospel.

III. That the principal means employed for the attainment of these objects be, the issue of suitable publications ; the enrolment of the names of Members ; public meetings, lectures, and sermons ; addresses and deputations to Parliamentary representatives ; petitions to the Legislature or the Sovereign ; correspondence with kindred Societies, with a view to obtain and communicate information ; and the application of direct missionary agency to the special case of the Romanists.

IV. That the Society be conducted by a President, Treasurer, Committee, two Clerical and two Lay Secretaries, and two Librarians.

V. That Members be of two classes—

1. That every person contributing a Donation of Five Guineas or upwards at one time, or an Annual Subscription of Five Shillings or upwards, be a Subscribing Member.

2. That every person from among the operative classes, who shall be recommended by two Subscribing Members, be admissible as a Free Member, subject to annual re-election.

— And that all Members be entitled to attend the General Meetings of the Society, and to receive the Annual Reports, and other publications, as far as the funds will admit, preference being given to the Subscribing Members, to whom also the privilege of voting will be confined.

VI. That a Committee be annually elected, consisting of thirty Lay Subscribing Members, together with all Clergy resident in the parish who are likewise Subscribing Members of the Society, with power to fill up vacancies. That this Committee elect, either from among themselves or from other Subscribing Members, District Sub-com-

mittees, with a view to carrying out the objects of the Society generally in the parish.

VII. That the General Committee receive the Reports of the District-sub-committees ; determine on the admission and annual re-election of Free members, in pursuance of Rule V. ; regulate all matters of expenditure ; suggest plans for general adoption ; and supply such publications as may be required for distribution.

VIII. That all publications circulated by the Society be first approved by the General Committee, and bear the stamp of the "ISLINGTON PROTESTANT INSTITUTE."

IX. That the General Committee meet on the third Monday in every month, and oftener if needful. Five Members to constitute a quorum.

X. That the financial year of the Society close on the 31st of December, and that an Annual General Meeting of the Members be held as soon after that date as may be fixed by the General Committee.

XI. That the Secretaries shall call a Special General Meeting on the requisition of not less than twenty Subscribing Members ; that such requisition be in writing, and specify the object for which the meeting is to be summoned ; and that not less than seven days' notice be given, by circular, to the Subscribing Members of the Society.

XII. That none of the Rules of the Society be repealed or altered, nor any new ones adopted, but at the Annual Meeting, or at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose.

XIII. That all Meetings of the Society be opened with prayer, and closed with benediction.

XIV. That it be earnestly recommended to all the Members of this Society to make its important object and plans a subject of special and frequent prayer, both in private and in the family.

N.B. 1. Contributions in aid of the Institute will be thankfully received by any of the officers, or at the offices, 2, Hornsey-row, Upper-street.

2. *As the lowest qualification for Membership has been fixed at the rate of 5s., it is obvious that the Society can only be maintained by the liberality of such as can afford to contribute more largely to its Funds.*

3. The publications of the Institute may be purchased at Mr. Jackson's, Bookseller and Publisher, Islington-green, and 21, Paternoster-row.

4. Parties contemplating the formation of similar Societies in any part of the country, are cordially invited to correspond with the officers of the Institute, who will also be thankful for any authentic information and friendly communication from Societies already in existence.

MODERN POPERY,

ITS STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS AS AN AGGRESSIVE POWER.

THE Papal Aggression has opened the eyes of many British Protestants to the real character and policy of the Roman Church. The false peace, in which they had lulled themselves to rest, has been rudely disturbed, and the truce, which modern Liberalism had striven to patch up between Protestantism and Popery, is seen to be a fraud and a delusion. The truth is once more recognized, that an earnest conflict is before us, to save our religion and our liberty from being trampled down by a subtle and persevering enemy. Popery and the religion of the Bible cannot live in peace together; and the rights of freemen would quickly expire under the baneful shadow of persecuting canons, and the recovered ascendancy of the Church of Rome.

In the great conflict, which clearly awaits us, presumption and despondency are almost equally dangerous. If we despise our enemy, and underrate its strength, we shall rush hastily into the battle, to meet only discomfiture and disgrace. If we are appalled by its gigantic resources, and forget the secret causes of weakness, which it carries in its bosom, we shall betray, by coward fears, the cause of truth and righteousness. We must learn alike the strength and the weakness of the confederacy that assails us, in order to persevere and prevail in the arduous warfare that lies before us.

During the last thirty years, British statesmen, in general, have been lapped in a fatal and ignorant security. Their private feelings and public policy have been founded on two great maxims, in which they have placed a blind confidence. Popery, in their opinion, has

been greatly reformed and mitigated by the progress of human intelligence. The lion has been changed into a lamb. The patrons and abettors of the foulest persecutions have grown mild, gentle, and tolerant. The cruel maxims and decrees of the middle ages have been laid aside, and been replaced by a gentle and humane policy. Grosser abuses have been rectified, and the system of the Roman Catholic Church brought into greater accordance with human reason, and the wants and spirit of modern society. On the strength of this favourite idea, they have indulged liberally in compliments to the Catholic priests ; and have declaimed loudly against the bigotry of those Protestants, who persisted in judging of the Church of Rome by her own unchangeable decrees and public formularies. Those dusty folios, they fancied, had been long ago consigned to neglect and oblivion, in obedience to the advanced intelligence of our more enlightened age. Still, amidst these public compliments to the liberality of their Catholic countrymen, their secret conviction has been, that Popery, after all, is too unreasonable and absurd to have any dangerous power of fascination. They have maintained that our country might well dispense with every political safeguard against the aggressions of the Court of Rome, because there could be no risk whatever of infection from such a heap of antiquated and puerile superstitions.

These two maxims, the secret basis on which our statesmen have founded their policy for many years, have lately had their utter falsehood signally exposed. A little cloud, like a man's hand, arose twenty years ago at Oxford, and has since covered the ecclesiastical firmament. The Tractarian movement began with the professed object of defending the Church of England against Popery as well as Dissent ; but the fascination of a serpent seemed to rest upon its progress, and its disciples were led, step by step, into the adoption of the whole cycle of Romish doctrine. Hundreds of intelligent men, born and nursed in the bosom of a Protestant community, ordained clergy of the National Church, or classical students, preparing for its ministry, have embraced Popery for the Catholic faith, and given their public adhesion to the Church of Rome, attested in several instances by real sacrifices of wealth and influence. The moment when we were gravely taught that Popery had lost all power to deceive, and, in some cases, the very parties by whom this voice of false peace was uttered, have furnished the most striking instances in the whole records of history of its seductive influence. After witnessing the rise of the Tractarian school, with its mournful train of open apostasies,

who shall dare to tell us any longer, that the intelligence of the nineteenth century has robbed the mystery of iniquity of its power to beguile, or that the philtre of Babylon is less intoxicating than in former ages ?

While the course of the Tractarian movement has refuted one of these popular errors, which reckons Popery too unreasonable to be seductive, the acts of the Pope and the conduct of the priesthood, on the Continent and in Ireland, have dispelled, just as rudely, the twin falsehood, which claims for it the merit of some vast and undefined improvement in liberality and toleration. The Papal Brief has startled the dreamers out of their deep slumber. They have seen our country parcelled out by Pius IX., at his pleasure, and a Prince Cardinal appointed to govern the new dioceses, by the rules of the Canon Law, and with the plenitude of apostolic jurisdiction. They have seen the existence of a Protestant Church, and the authority of the British Queen, alike passed over in contemptuous silence. Abroad, they have seen quiet, inoffensive Christians sentenced to years of imprisonment with galley slaves, for no other crime than reading the Word of God. In Ireland, they have seen the Scriptures committed to the flames, converts threatened with assassination and burning, and stoned almost to death, and scenes of violence enacted, under priestly instigation, that revive the memory of the worst excesses of the dark ages. They have seen the Romish organs openly disclaim the maxims of tolerance, which they once professed, and state, in so many words, that, when their Church recovers the ascendancy, it would, of course, imprison, hang, and burn the Protestant heretics, just as it might judge most expedient for the completeness of its own victory. They have heard the frantic invitation, addressed by Roman Catholic priests to foreign powers, inviting them to cross the Channel with half a million of rifles and bayonets, in order to humble our heretic nation by the sack of London, and thus to revenge our disobedience to the Vicar of Christ. In France, the "Univers," the organ of the Jesuits, rejoices in the hope of combining all the Roman Catholic powers in a grand crusade against the British empire. And now, after the sentence on the Madiat at Florence, the outrages at Tourmakeady, Tuam, and Drogheda, the published letters of Drs. Cahill and M'Hale, and the loud echoes of defiance in all the Popish journals, who will dare to say, any longer, that the Church of Rome has ceased to persecute, and laid aside her Bulls and Decretals, in submission to those heretical doctrines of toleration and liberty of conscience, which her priesthood never cease to detest and deplore ?

Our country is now, therefore, in a state of transition. The principles, on which our policy has been based by all our statesmen, have been cut from under their feet, and the helmsman is left without chart or compass, in the midst of breakers. Those who once despised the Church of Rome, as a feeble and worn-out superstition, when they see the giant strides with which it has been advancing of late years, and witness its unexpected powers of fascination, are in danger of recoiling into hopeless despondency. Vain, presumptuous confidence, and coward fear, are two alternate forms of the same spirit of unbelief, and are almost equally helpful to the progress of our great enemy. To attain that humble, but holy confidence, which alone can ensure the victory, we must survey the gigantic strength, and also the inherent weakness, of the Church of Rome.

I. Let us first consider the strength of Popery, as a system of aggression on the Protestant Churches, and on our national liberty. This has been greatly neglected or underrated by British Protestants. In their island home they have inherited the fruit of the severe struggles of their forefathers, and have forgotten the immense extent of the countries, where Popery is still dominant, and the long and arduous sacrifices by which our own deliverance from its double yoke has been secured. Its strength is equally apparent, whether we consider its popular attractions for vulgar minds, its powerful and immense organization, or its deeper and more hidden sources of seductive influence ; while the effect of all these causes is dangerously increased by the intestine divisions of the Protestant Churches.

1. And first, the Church of Rome contains many striking popular attractions, as a visible religious community. First among these we may place the fact of ITS SUPERIOR NUMBERS. Our country is threatened, in Dr. Cahill's letter, with the hostility of two hundred and forty millions of Catholic Christians. The estimate is grossly exaggerated, like most others from the same quarter. But even a sober estimate will probably assign from one hundred and thirty to one hundred and fifty millions of followers to the Church of Rome ; while the various bodies of Protestants amount to eighty or ninety, and those of the Greek and Eastern Churches to fifty or sixty millions. The Church of Rome is thus, probably, almost as numerous as all other Christians combined, and may possibly even outnumber them by a slight majority. Now this, with superficial and careless minds, constitutes no slight attraction. All those who think it necessary to choose some form of Christian profession, and who find the search for truth troublesome and painful, will be prone to adopt the creed which has numbers on its

side. Next to the plan of casting lots for our religion, there is no course, which more readily cuts the knot of difficult controversy, and relieves men from the toil of thought, than to range themselves under the banner which has the most numerous followers. The growth of democratic ideas, in the present century, is only likely to render this attraction of the Roman Church still more powerful and seductive. Whenever people are accustomed to decide all political questions, however weighty, by electoral majorities, and are desirous to secure a form of religious profession with the smallest possible sacrifice of personal thought and trouble, they will naturally choose their faith by the same rule, and thus enrol themselves among the vast society of the Church of Rome. The attraction is powerful, and almost irresistible, when truth is not the real object, but merely a decent form of outward profession; just as the water, drawn from the ocean by the power of the sunbeams, inevitably flows back to it again, when submitted to the prevailing influence of terrestrial gravitation.

The Church of Rome, besides her superior numbers, can boast, further, of her VENERABLE ANTIQUITY. Her religious rivals, in Western Europe, date, at the earliest, from the time of the Reformation. The Church of England, in its actual form, as a Reformed and Protestant community, and in those formularies and usages, by which it is popularly defined, had its birth under Edward the Sixth. The Lutheran and Reformed Confessions, on the Continent, belong to the same period. The Independent and Baptist Churches of our own country, and the kindred sects on the continent, trace their origin to the sixteenth century. The Wesleyan body is still more modern, and indeed only of yesterday. The Moravians trace their history a little higher, and the Waldenses of Piedmont higher still; but these last, from their small numbers and retired position, have long since disappeared, almost entirely from the general view. Again, the most ancient nobles of our own country reckon their pedigree, at farthest, from the Norman Conquest. Many of the European kingdoms had their birth in the middle ages, some of them still later, and France is almost the only one, which has preserved its political unity from the time of Charlemagne. The spiritual claims of Popery to supreme jurisdiction had been widely acknowledged, and even its temporal sovereignty had been secured, long before the rise of our existing religious denominations, at a time when the ancestors of our nobility were obscure and unknown, and when the kingdoms of the west had scarcely emerged out of long ages of barbarism and violence.

Now, if there be a large class of minds for whom novelty has a strong charm, who are prone to judge by the current of popular opinion, and float with the stream of a majority, there are others who regard whatever is ancient with a deep and instinctive reverence. The Church of Rome, while she attracts the former by the vast number of her adherents, fascinates these others by the long ages through which she has exercised her marvellous dominion. From the mountain tops of history, she seems able to look down with calm contempt on a host of ephemeral adversaries, which have risen and disappeared like meteors of the night, or else have been crushed under her chariot wheels in her triumphant progress to universal supremacy. Her seat of worship and centre of authority claims the proud title of the Eternal City. Her pedigree pretends to reach, by unbroken links, to the time of the Diocletian martyrs, and of the Apostles of the Lord. Her solemn Gregorian chants have resounded in her temples for more than twelve hundred years. From her throne on the Tiber, she has witnessed the rise, and often, too, the fall, of the European kingdoms, has moulded the fortunes of each infant state, and watched it in its growth to vigorous manhood, as the common nurse, mother, and mistress of all. To those who love the high embowed roof, and the dim religious light which streams through the aisles of the ruined cathedral, and to walk by solemn moonlight amidst the graves of former generations, this character of the Roman Church constitutes a seductive influence of indescribable power. She seems to recal them from the petty ephemeral controversies of the day by a voice of authority, that travels down to them through the vista of past ages; and offers them, in her own history, the largest scope for the spirit of dreamy reverie, for romantic meditation over the graves of the past, and the memory of all forgotten things.

THE IMPOSING UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME is another source of its popular attractiveness. It is true that, beneath the surface, there is a vast amount of secret strife and incurable division, but the effect is not the less striking upon a general and careless view. Her followers are found in almost every region of the earth. They form the whole population of Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and the vast majority in France, Bavaria, Belgium, and Austria, and, till of late, in Ireland. In Switzerland, Hungary, Prussia, the north of Germany, and Great Britain, they form a numerous and, perhaps, an increasing body. They have their millions in the United States, and have almost exclu-

sive hold on Lower Canada, and the States of South America. They are spread, by numerous conversions, among the various communities of Eastern Christians. Their missions once triumphed in Paraguay, and are spread at this moment over the north of Africa, throughout India, on the borders of China, and over many islands of the Pacific Ocean. But, however widely dispersed through almost every tongue and people of the earth, they submit to one common discipline, accept the same creed, and own obedience to one supreme authority. The Latin mass is chanted alike under the dome of St. Peter's, and in the islets of the Pacific, or on the shores of China, and the creed of Pope Pius is accepted with equal deference by the Roman Catholic whose home is on the shores of the Baltic, or among our antipodes in Australia or New Zealand. There is something in this spectacle adapted to awe and subjugate the minds of men, and to make them feel that an authority so real and so widely diffused, must be more than human, and may reasonably claim a Divine origin.

These features of numerical superiority, of high antiquity, and of visible unity, are crowned in the Roman Church by another, perhaps, even more seductive—ITS CEREMONIAL MAGNIFICENCE. In the whole history of mankind no religious system has exceeded Popery in the consummate skill with which all the senses have been made to do it service. Architecture and sculpture, painting and music, have all conspired to do honour to the Catholic worship, and clouds of incense and gorgeous costumes have been called in, to heighten the effect on the senses of the anthem, pealing through the long-drawn aisle, amidst forms of breathing marble and frescoes rich with the colouring of heaven. The Basilica of St. Peter's, and the Cathedral of Cologne, the sculptures of Canova, the frescoes of Michael Angelo, the cartoons of Raphael, the masses and requiems of Mozart and Pergolesi, and a thousand other writers and names of hardly inferior celebrity, prove how largely art and taste, in their most varied productions, have ministered to the world-wide seductions of the Church of Rome. "For the illiterate it has its images, pomp, and shows ; for the more devout, its unceasing prayers ; for the musician, the most exquisite chants and anthems ; for the painter, the most splendid efforts of human art ; for the imaginative all the visions of fancy, its gloomy cloisters, lights, and processions, and incense, and beautiful churches with painted windows, priests with splendid garments and varied dresses." All these different sources of attraction, numbers, antiquity, unity, and ceremonial grandeur, conspire to weave the net of Papal influence, and to draw every thoughtless observer, and doubtful inquirer, with every lover of

sensuous forms and dreamy imaginative worship, within the charmed circle of her spiritual dominion.

2. But the Roman Church does not depend solely on these popular attractions, to allure back the wanderers of Christendom into its capacious fold. It is gifted, further, with a powerful and immense organisation. It is one vast, well-contrived, persevering confederacy, for the recovery of universal supremacy over the faith and conscience of mankind.

Of late there have been many rumours and fears on the subject of French invasion. Our statesmen have owned the danger to which we might be exposed from the impulses of jealousy or ambition in our powerful neighbour, and the revival of Napoleon's dynasty, and perhaps very soon of his empire, has been thought ominous for the peace of England. We have been reminded that half a million of bayonets are now under the control of a despotic ruler, whose decisions might be swift and secret, and in whose good faith it would be unwise to place implicit reliance. But there is another invasion still more imminent, and even more dangerous, because the vanguard of the enemy are now among us, and we ourselves, by a strange folly, are providing officers for his troops, assisting him to train his forces, and supplying the commissariat of his army. The priesthood and the various orders of the Roman Church are that army. By their oath and calling they are the determined foes of every Protestant state, unless it is prepared, at their bidding, to renounce its dearest privileges, the truth of God, the freedom of the subject, and the prerogatives of the sovereign. The Philistines are already upon us, and while we startle at the thought of a French invasion, we continue half asleep under the actual presence and progress of invaders, equally hostile as a foreign army, and not less fatal, in their success, to our national independence, and the dearest rights of every British Christian.

. This confederacy is formidable from its numbers. When we reckon up the whole amount of the Roman Catholic population in various countries, and consider how the priesthood swarm in Spain and Italy, how many are the orders of monastic observance, and the various ramifications of affiliated societies, Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans, Trappists and Carmelites, Paulists and Oratorians, Sisters of Mercy and Brethren of the Sacred Heart, it is hardly an extravagant estimate, that nearly a million of souls are enrolled, under one standard or other, in this countless militia of the Roman See. All of these are animated by one common purpose, to advance the power of that religious system

to which they have vowed their obedience, and to overturn whatever stands in the way of its progress. Most of them are trained under a rigid discipline, and accustomed to a thorough subordination. It is the boast of the Jesuit institutes, that every member of the order must be like a corpse, or the staff of an old man, in the hand of his superior, and the superiors are equally passive in the hand of the general. What a mighty, well-contrived scheme for effecting the subjugation of the rest of mankind ! There is, further, the powerful influence of emulation between the regular and secular clergy, and the different orders of regulars among themselves. The monks are the rivals of the parochial curates, the Dominicans of the Franciscans, the Jesuits of all ; and thus a further impulse is given to the common activity of spiritual ambition. The priesthood and confraternities of Rome are a vast army, where each regiment is in thorough subjection to its own leaders, while every band is jealous of the exploits of the rest, and eager to surpass them in its labours against their common enemies.

The celibacy of the priesthood adds immensely to their aggressive power. It shuts them off from all the ordinary instincts of human affection ; it divorces them from all mankind ; and marries them to the Court of Rome. Domestic life, with its thousand gentle charities, and the love of country, with its noble aspirations, are alike forbidden them, that the current of their zeal may be confined to one channel and be directed to one sole object, the establishment of priestly dominion, and the triumph of a great ecclesiastical corporation over the consciences of Christians and the thrones of kings.

But in estimating the strength of this conspiracy, we must not forget that mighty engine which the Court of Rome has devised for extending and deepening its influence, the practice of auricular confession. This terrible institute gives the priesthood access to millions of hearts, enables them to worm out every secret, which can bear on ecclesiastical interest, to become accomplices in every profitable crime, to frighten the timorous into submission by the dread of indirect disclosure, and drag ten thousand consciences, as victims and slaves, at the chariot wheels of triumphant superstition. It is a daring attempt to parody the Divine Omniscience, while it becomes a mighty lever in the hands of an organised and zealous hierarchy, by which to vault into the seats of national power, and enact a further parody of the Divine Omnipotence. Combine these features of the system into one view—their number, their discipline, their mutual emulation, their isolation from all the natural instincts of humanity, their devotion to one sole object, the strength of one master passion, when it has

swallowed up all the rest, like the rod of Aaron, and the secret tribunal which sets the priest in the place of God, and places at their disposal the secrets of thirty millions of families, scattered through every country on the face of the earth; and we must own that the world never before witnessed such a stupendous machinery, as the Romish hierarchy, for establishing a universal despotism on the ruins of natural conscience and the liberties of mankind.

The dangers of this vast conspiracy are increased by its subtle and insidious modes of operation. We have many instances in our own days. A leading agent of Rome has exhorted his comrades to train up a supply of household servants, who may enter disguised into Protestant families, and from facts which I have heard myself, in three or four different cases, there can be no doubt that this mode of concealed proselytism is vigorously carried on. The case of the Jesuit, Heath, in the reign of Elizabeth, will illustrate their unscrupulous policy. He had instructions from the General of the Jesuits to pretend himself a teacher of the new religion; and a budget of heresies he was to disseminate, such as Arianism, Antinomianism, and the doctrines of the Munster Anabaptists, which he was to mix up with those of the Reformation. After six years' preaching up and down, he applied to the Dean of Rochester, as a poor minister desirous of some preferment. "The Dean," says Strype, "gave him a turn of preaching in the cathedral. In the pulpit he let fall out of his pocket a letter written to him by a Jesuit in Madrid, with directions how to manage himself in his mission. This was found by the sexton and brought to the bishop, who examined him so closely, that he made him confess himself to be a Jesuit, though at first he pretended that he had wholly fallen off from that order. They searched his chambers, when in his boots were found beads, a licence from the Jesuits, and a bull from Pius IV., to preach what doctrine that society pleased for the dividing of Protestants, and particularly in England." Can we doubt that Pius IX., whose Brief testifies his zeal for the advancement of the Catholic Church in "the most flourishing kingdom of England," will be no less accommodating to those skilful rowers, the company of Jesus, than his predecessor in the days of Queen Elizabeth?

3. But besides its visible attractions and formidable organization, there are deeper influences, which constitute the strength of the Church of Rome, and are the secret of its long enduring vitality. Superior numbers, external splendour, and gorgeous ceremonies, like the painted cheeks of the harlot, may serve to attract the superficial, the frivolous, and the sensual; but it is by witcheries of a more

specious character, that she wins to her bosom a higher order of minds, and enlists under banners devout, sincere, and conscientious votaries.

Among these deeper seductions of Popery one of the most powerful is THE GREAT BODY OF DIVINE TRUTH, which it still retains, and enshrines in the very heart of its system. Error is a parasite, which is never able to stand alone. Like the ivy or misletoe, which seeks for an elm or oak around which to entwine itself, it borrows a semblance of strength and beauty from some truth, which it conceals and stifles, while it pretends to adorn it with a more beautiful foliage. Truth, mingled with error, or concealed in its bosom, is the talisman of its safety, the salt which preserves it from corruption. To dissolve the union between these moral opposites is the only way by which falsehood can be effectually overthrown. While Lot was in the midst of them, the cities of the plain were secure, but his entry into Zoar was the signal of their ruin. Viewed in this light, what a mighty power of seduction abides in the theological system of the Roman Church! In profession, it retains all the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, not only the simpler elements, but the deep and holy mysteries of revealed religion. It maintains the unity of the Godhead, the truth so solemnly proclaimed in the first and greatest of the commandments. It recognizes fully the doctrine of the Trinity, the revealed basis of the new covenant, and adores the Godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal. It receives into its capacious system the whole moral law of the ten commandments. For although in its popular catechisms, and in its daily practice, the second of them is set aside, in theory and in profession the whole of them are maintained, as a revelation binding on the conscience of every Christian. It recognizes the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the inspired oracles of God, appeals to their authority in almost every public law and ordinance, and has based upon them an immense superstructure of theological commentary. It owns the great doctrine of a Divine atonement, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, the infinite efficacy of His redemption, and all the main truths which centre around that great mystery of redeeming love. It maintains, however grievously disfigured, the ministry and the two sacraments, the standing ordinances of the visible Church of Christ. It asserts the historical reality of the Gospel, and its supernatural origin, in contrast with rationalistic and mythical forms of infidelity. It enforces the solemn warnings of Scripture on sin, on holiness, and immortality, and crowns its messages by a continual appeal to the revealed certainty of a coming judgment,

when every one shall receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil. The whole compass of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, and the whole range of its truths, from the Creation and the Fall to the triumphs of Redemption and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, are thus received into this capacious system; which claims, on this very account, to be the faithful and unchanging depository of the Catholic faith, once for all delivered to the saints of God.

Now this immense body of truth, received by the Church of Rome, gives it immense power to parry the assaults of enemies, to disarm the suspicion of devout, but candid minds, and to lull into false peace those who have once come within the charmed circle of its influence. How is it possible that a Church, which receives the whole Bible, the Trinity, and the Atonement, the moral law, and the promises of the Gospel, can be justly chargeable with apostasy from the faith, and still more, with a character directly Antichristian? Surely it is a causeless prejudice which repels so many Protestants from her bosom, and makes them regard a Church, sound on all the great essentials of doctrine, as the enemy of Christ? Where all fundamental truth is received, there can be no serious danger, and where there are, also, such added attractions, and such persevering claims to be the sole channel of Divine grace, adhesion is the safer policy. It is better to believe too much than too little, and to receive the whole truth, though encrusted by a few needless additions, than to run the risk of embracing a maimed and imperfect creed, which may be found worthless on the day of final trial. By such pleas the Church of Rome commends herself to a large class of thoughtful and sincere followers, and entrenches herself, as in a secure and impregnable fortress, against the assaults of her more fiery and impetuous adversaries. She contrasts their fierce invectives with these fairer outlines of her own theology, and then persuades the ingenuous and unsuspecting that bigotry and prejudice alone can account for the dislike by which this fair and beautiful Hind is regarded by the wild beasts of Protestant heresy.

But this seductive power of Popery, from the truth which it still retains, is increased by the peculiar nature of those corruptions, with which that truth is disguised and overlaid. This is a subject which demands, and will repay, a little careful reflection. British Protestants have been too apt to look upon the system as a mere chance-medley of superstition, so strange and absurd in some of its main features, as to make it surprising that it could ever gain the assent of any reasonable mind. They have hence inferred, with great rashness, that it can have little power to recover its lost ground, in an age of thought

and general intelligence. Events ought already to have undeceived them; and a little meditation on the history of the Papal Church will serve to dissipate the illusion entirely, and give them a juster view of its tremendous powers of fascination.

And first the corruptions of Popery have all of them been gradual in their progress. They are not follies and falsehoods, abruptly and suddenly introduced into the heart of a system to which they are utterly opposed. By slow and stealthy steps the mystery of iniquity began, and by slow and stealthy progress it mounted up to the height of its triumph. It would be easier to disentangle the subtle web, in which Divine truth and gross errors are mingled together, if we could draw one broad line of demarcation, and say, Before this, the faith was pure and entire; but after it, all was corrupted by human additions, and self-righteous and idolatrous corruption. It may be possible to point out the time when one and another false doctrine was formally and publicly ratified, but the evil had spread deeply through the veins of the Church, before its eruption on the skin, in a settled and fretting leprosy. It is thus a delicate and difficult task, to separate between the truth of Christ and the superstitious inventions which contradict or obscure it, between the true Church and the apostasy which has quietly and silently, by slow degrees, crept over it. The deflection of the curve, at every point, is almost insensible; and it is only by applying the compass of God's word, after an interval of long ages, that we see the craft of the spiritual seducer, who has turned the flock of Christ away from the true Zion, and set their faces towards the mystic Babylon.

Another feature, which distinguishes these corruptions, is their popular and alluring character. Without this property they could never have received the stamp of Catholicity. Errors, merely ephemeral in their nature, or which are attractive only to a small section of the visible Church, could never succeed in passing current, as an integral part of the faith of Christ. There is a sifting process, through which every doctrine and practice must have passed, before it could be incorporated into the Romish system. First, it must have been silently and gradually introduced, with no violent shock to the existing faith of the Church. It must then have shewn its attractiveness by securing a large extent of popular approval. When opposition arose, it must have been able to maintain its ground, and thus to prove that it had its source in no superficial and momentary impulse, but in some deep and abiding instinct, widely diffused among professing Christians. Even after this severe ordeal, when it was established

widely in the popular creed or practice, before it could be received into the Romish system, and officially recognized, it would have to be submitted to a theological scrutiny, to be pruned of its sensual grossness, and hammered and welded into a seeming harmony with doctrines previously accepted by the whole Church; that it might take its place, without any striking and manifest incongruity, in the vast Pantheon of the Romish theology. And thus every error of doctrine or practice, which the Church of Rome has ever sanctioned, must have had its root in some of the deepest and most universal instincts of the human heart, and been fashioned by her divines into that very shape, in which its opposition to the Gospel of Christ is the most ingeniously disguised and obscured.

It will be enough to instance two main features, which characterize the whole Papal system, and in which this mark of adaptation to the natural instincts of the human heart appears in a very conspicuous light.

What was the main feature of religion, in every tribe and family of the heathen world? It was the worship of genii, demigods, celestial mediators, higher than man, but confessedly lower than the Supreme Divinity. In Greece, in Egypt, in Chaldea, in Hindustan, and wherever fallen man has framed his own religion, or corrupted the light of early revelation, this same character reappears. The fallen heart shrinks from intercourse with a Being of almighty power and unspotted holiness. It feels the gulf too vast between its own weakness and impurity and the God of heaven. Yet the religious craving is strong within. Man must look up to some unseen power, and secure its friendship, or avert its enmity, by acts of visible worship. Hence his proneness to invent the countless mediators of heathenism, to personify Divine attributes, or the powers of nature, or deify the spirits of departed heroes; and thus to people the invisible world with a Pantheon of demigods, more accessible than God himself to the prayer of their votaries, and more indulgent towards their conscious imperfections. Man, ever since the fall, has reversed the facts of his own creation, and has made to himself gods in his own image. Idolatry, arising from these subtle, powerful motives, is the universal tendency of the fallen heart.

Now, the saint and virgin worship, which prevails in the Church of Rome, is a skilful incorporation of this instinct, so prevalent throughout the heathen world, into the Christian system. In obedience to the stern voice of the Law and the Gospel, all the old idols of the earlier superstitions are rigidly cast aside. But to satisfy the deep instinct,

in which heathen idolatry had its source, and which remained as powerful as ever, a new system of relative worship was gradually introduced. Heathen practices were baptized with Christian names, and grouped skilfully around the doctrine of the faith. The Virgin quickly became the celestial Venus, the Isis and Astarte, or Queen of heaven, in a new mythology. The heroes of Greece and Chaldea were replaced by the Christian martyrs, and the lower gods of Olympus yielded their seats to Michael and his angels. The Pantheon, consecrated by the Pope, became a Christian temple for the worship of all the saints; and idolatry, in theory and practice, was gradually reappropriated, and incorporated into the Catholic religion.

Again, the feature which marks the whole history of the Jews, is their self-righteous trust in their own merit, and their dependence on the moral efficacy of outward ceremonies. This error haunted them, like a dark shadow, from the day when they rashly vowed a full obedience to the law at the foot of Sinai, to the persecution and condemnation of our Lord, for a fancied breach of the Sabbath, and a real neglect of the Pharisaic traditions. It had its root in the deepest instincts of the fallen heart, and was thus a constant, not a mere occasional obliquity. The Church of Rome has turned this great sin of the Jews to its own account, like the idolatry of the heathen. She has adopted it into her creed, enshrined it in the heart of her dogmatic theology, adjusted it skilfully into some imperfect agreement with the doctrines of grace; and thus, by her teaching on the merits of the saints and the works of supererogation, and the *opus operatum* in her sacramental theory, has canonized under the Gospel that double evil of self-righteousness, and reliance on outward services, which caused the exclusion of the Jews from the Gospel covenant.

But, besides the captivating nature of the errors in themselves, and the severe ordeal through which they have had to pass before they could receive the stamp of catholicity, they are rendered still more delusive and dangerous by their skilful adjustment into a great religious system. They are thus made to lend each other mutual support. It seems as if one stone could not be taken from the building without endangering the whole; so that timorous minds are content to resign themselves to implicit faith in every Romish superstition, as their only way of escape from endless uncertainty and utter unbelief. The popular religion, in Papal countries, is so grossly in opposition to the Word of God, that it might seem incapable of enduring the light, even for a moment. If the theory had been fixed at the same unscriptural level, it would have leant no support to

the rotten fabric, because it would have been itself manifestly untenable. If it had retained the rigour of Scriptural truth, it would itself have plainly condemned the practice of the Church, and proclaimed the necessity of a vast internal reformation. It has, therefore, with astute policy, been fixed by the Romish divines and Councils nearly half way between the truth of Scripture and the popular practice. By this means it is brought so much nearer to the Word of God, as to be more defensible under the pressure of controversy, and to supply more loopholes for perplexed and specious argument ; while it is sufficiently near akin to the practice, to furnish a real support for the worst corruptions and grossest superstitions of the common people, as soon as the pressure of controversy is withdrawn. It has refined and learned distinctions on modes and degrees of worship, to do service in theological tournaments; with a practical latitude to the people, to pour forth their hearts in the utmost prostration of idolatry, before the blood of St. Januarius, and winking images of the Virgin Mary. This artificial and ingenious construction of the Romish theology enables it to silence the scruples of its more enlightened followers, while it gives full play to all the idolatrous and self-righteous instincts of the human heart.

This leads us to another feature of Popery, in which consists one further secret of its peculiarly seductive charm, its alternatives of laxness and rigour. There are times when the conscience of man slumbers, and all that he seeks from his religious teachers is a license to walk in the way of his own heart, by offering the small quit-rent of a few religious services. There are other times when it wakes from its trance, and loudly demands the surrender of the whole being to the service of God, and some rigorous penalty for every past breach of His commandments. The Church of Rome provides, with politic care, for both stages of spiritual experience. For the lax and worldly she has provided her doctrines of probability and of intention, with a host of Jesuit moralists, to dispense with the love of God and every Christian virtue, to justify duelling, theft, and licentiousness, and to proclaim the wearing of a medal, or reciting a rosary to the Virgin, a full discharge from the guilt of a thousand acts of criminal profligacy. But for the alarmed and awakened conscience she provides her stern and ascetic moralists, her penances and macerations, her institutes of perpetual silence, and a large variety of self-inflicted sufferings, closed by the long and dreary vista of purgatorial torment. In a different sense from the Apostle, she becomes all things to all men, smooth and accommodating to the worldly sinner, and surpass-

ingly rigid with the devout and austere, that she may everywhere enlarge the range of her own spiritual dominion, and reign supreme over the consciences of men.

The seductive power of Romanism may be seen, further, in the compromise which it supplies between the two opposite intellectual tendencies of the human heart, superstition and unbelief. These two rival powers commonly rule by turns, and divide the world between them. "Now, the soul of man," it has been well remarked, "is drawn to God, and yet repelled from Him, as the electrified ball when it comes in contact with the object which attracted it. Man is constrained to acknowledge God, and to tremble before the God whom he acknowledges. He strives to escape from God, only to find himself drawn to Him by bonds which he cannot break. Under this double influence, attractive and repulsive, his eccentric orbit is like that of the comets, now approaching within the scorching beams of the central heat and light, and again driven away into the utmost regions of space, as if let loose from all central and restraining influence. Under these influences he acts in one or other of two ways. He concludes that God takes no notice of him, and follows the bent of his own inclinations; or, in the dread of punishment he betakes himself to superstitious and idle ceremonies. Some are Sadducees, and others are Pharisees; some are Epicureans, and others are Stoics; some are Infidels, and others are Devotees. The majority flit between unbelief and superstition: giving themselves, in health, to the wildness of the one, and in trouble clinging to the strictness of the other, and generally remaining in a bond of neutral territory, like the false prophet's coffin, 'seeming to hang by heaven, but truly upon earth.' "*.

Now the Church of Rome, while her professed system is one gigantic fabric of superstition, affords a wide and ample latitude, within her own bosom, for the rival spirit of unbelief. Only let a decent submission be paid to the authority of the priest, and all besides is a matter of indifference. The most free-thinking speculators flourish in safety under her protecting shadow; and atheists themselves, if they will uncover at the host, and pay for a few masses, may live and die without molestation, with the credit of being obedient children of that indulgent mother, the Catholic Church. Her zeal is reserved for any signs of deep, genuine, religious conviction, drawn from the Word of God, and issuing in the reception of the Gospel of Christ, with a firm rejection of the human corruptions which obscure and

* M'Cosh on the "Method of Divine Government."

destroy it. For these she has no tolerance. Their growth would be fatal to her dominion, and the rack and torture are called in at once, to root these troublesome weeds out of the Lord's vineyard. But for real, habitual infidelity, when duly garnished by a profession of respect for the Church, her charity is supreme. Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Helvetius, live and die in all the sanctity which Romish sacraments can confer, while the Madias are sent to the galleys, and Ridley and Latimer sentenced to the flames. Thus does the Church of Rome contrive to enlist under her banners two schools of thought, which almost divide the world of intellect between them; and while she naturally attracts to herself all the votaries of superstition, secures an immense amount of practical support from the Christian Sadducees, whose secret worship is offered at the shrine of the infidel philosophy.

All these various causes, which conspire to give her unequalled powers of seduction, are further enhanced, in no slight degree, by the unhappy divisions of Protestant Christians. Whether we look abroad or at home, this truth is mournfully apparent. What first arrested the onward movement of the great Reformation? The unhappy schism between the German and Swiss Reformers, which has been embodied ever since in the two rival confessions of Zurich and of Augsburg. Through the breach thus made in the ranks of their adversaries, the Jesuits recovered possession of Poland, when half lost, and regained much of the ground in Germany which had been already wrested from them.

At home the same cause is actively at work, to increase the dangers of Papal Aggression. The Church of Rome unites in itself two distinct characters. It is a seductive religion, and a political conspiracy. It uses, by turns, its spiritual attractions, to recover for itself a political ascendancy; and wherever it acquires political power, it employs it with unscrupulous zeal, to forward its own ecclesiastical interests, and regain a wider dominion over the consciences of men. But British Christians and politicians are by no means sufficiently alive to this important truth. When our statesmen would deal with the usurpations of Popery, as a foreign power, they are met by the plea of its religious character, and the most simple and needful precautions against its subtle advances, are treated as a breach of the great laws of religious freedom. When weak, and aspiring to power, the Proteus of Rome hides herself under the gabardine of universal toleration, and free development of conscience, to cast it aside, without a moment's delay, when the victory is secure. Religious men, on the other hand, in contending with the superstitions of the Roman Church, and

deprecating the use of carnal weapons, are met and baffled at every turn, by the use which it makes of its political influence ; some act of arbitrary persecution, where it has the power to domineer, or some unwise concession of national patronage, by which it contrives to secure the moral support even of a Protestant Government, against the enemies which it dreads above all others—the preaching of the simple Gospel, and the training of children in the knowledge of the Word of God. Thus both classes alike, our statesmen and our religious philanthropists, are content to strive, with one arm tied up, against a subtle two-handed adversary. The too frequent result is that their public measures prove weapons of straw against the aggressions of the Vatican; and that missionary efforts are paralyzed, in the moment of success, by direct persecution from Popish authorities ; or by suicidal patronage to the priesthood, from political motives, through the short-sightedness and folly of Protestant statesmen.

Nor is this the only way in which the divisions of Protestants encourage the aggressive advances of Popery. The religious divisions of British Christians contribute still more powerfully to the same result. The differences which separate sensible and pious Dissenters from the sound and sober part of the Church of England, or from each other, are very trifling, when contrasted with that wide gulf which separates all of them alike from the Church of Rome. So long as we suffer differences of taste and feeling, of habit and association, or of divergent judgment on forms of discipline, and the lawfulness, expediency, or obligation of establishments, to conceal from our view our mutual agreement in the great things of the gospel, and the danger which threatens us from our common adversary, the Jesuits may well laugh to scorn our feeble and disjointed opposition. They have all the advantage of regular forces, trained by long and severe discipline, against a rude militia, called into the field by a sudden emergency, with no confidence in each other, or in their leaders. What can such levies expect in the conflict, but discomfiture and disgrace ? This is no time for Protestants to reckon up old feuds, and to indulge in hasty jealousies, to make their brethren offenders for a word, or to stand aloof from each other in cold and suspicious isolation. The only privilege which Churchmen or Dissenters could hope for from the Church of Rome, if it ever gained its ascendancy, would be that of Ulysses in the cave of Polyphemus, to be the last devoured. The times call loudly for union, for a spirit of generous confidence in the sincerity of Christian brethren, of mutual forbearance in minor questions of creed and discipline, and for united, earnest, persevering efforts to maintain the

truths of the Bible and the liberties of Englishmen, the Gospel of Christ, and the just and temperate rights of the individual conscience against the daring advances of the mightiest confederacy for quenching the truth of God, and crushing the freedom of mankind, which the world has ever witnessed from the beginning of time. Dis-united, we shall all, successively, prove an easy prey. But when once united in the common faith of the gospel, in brotherly love as Protestant Christians, and in patriotic zeal for our national independence, we may, under the blessing of God, defy all the Armadas and Gunpowder Treasons of the Church of Rome.

II. But it is time now to enter on a more cheering topic. Having considered the sources of the strength of Popery, which teach us the need of humility, watchfulness, and prayerful dependence on the help of God, in our efforts to oppose its further inroads, let us consider the causes of weakness which it carries about in its own bosom. These ought to stir up within us a holy courage in resisting its advances, and in rooting it out of those fastnesses of superstition where it has so long held an undisputed sway.

The first source of the secret weakness of Popery, amidst the loud boasting of its champions, is THE SANDY FOUNDATION on which it builds. Every system, based upon delusion and falsehood, must be doomed, soon or late, to a certain overthrow.

Now the Church of Rome advances a magnificent claim. It is the holy, catholic Church of Christ, out of which there is no salvation. It is the home of St. Peter, the prince of Apostles, founded on the rock of his authority by the voice of the Lord himself, secured by promise against the gates of hell, and consecrated by the blood of innumerable martyrs. Its Bishop is the infallible and inspired head of the visible Church militant, the Universal Sovereign of all the faithful, and of all earthly kingdoms, the Vicar of Christ upon earth. But in proportion to the vastness of these claims ought to be the strength of the evidence which sustains them. When we examine, however, into its nature, it proves to be a heap of frauds and forgeries. All the presumptions which the Church of Rome alleges, as *primâ facie* evidence of her authority, to avoid a dangerous appeal to Scripture, vanish upon close examination. They are beautiful, but empty bubbles, and disappear even while we gaze. She has superior numbers, compared with other Christian bodies. But the disciples of the false prophet of Mecca were once, if they are not now, more numerous than hers; and Buddhism, not to speak of heathenism generally, outnumbers her at the present hour. She is

ancient ; but Hinduism can boast of far higher antiquity. The creed of Pope Pius, and even the Lateran councils, are but of yesterday, compared with the writings of Confucius and the Vedas of Brahminical mythology. She has a round of gorgeous ceremonies ; but heathen priests have ever been skilful in these devices for decorating a sensual worship, and her own missionaries, among the Buddhists of Thibet, and the disciples of the Grand Lama, are astonished at the close resemblance between the rites they would overthrow, and those which they would introduce ; between the Popery of the East, and the heathenism of the Vatican, which they propose to set up on its ruins.

In the failure of these presumptive evidences, the Church of Rome is compelled to betake herself to the Scriptures for direct proofs of her authority. And here she has no alternative but the grossest absurdities or a palpable suicide. What shall we say, for instance, to the reasoning of infallible Popes, embodied in their Canon Law, when they would establish their claims by such arguments as these ? The Pope is the sole and supreme Head of the Church, because it is said that “in the beginning,” and not “in the beginnings,” God created the heaven and the earth. The ark was finished in one cubit above, and therefore the Pope alone, without the Emperor, is supreme over all Christendom. Our Lord replied to the Apostles, when they said, “Behold, here are two swords,” “It is enough.” He did not say, “It is too many.” Therefore both the spiritual and temporal sword belong to the Pope, as the vicar of Christ. But sword must be under sword, one of them held by the Pope himself, the other by the Emperor, under him and for him. It was said to the prophet Jeremiah, “I have set thee over the nations, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to plant, and to build.” Consequently, the Pope has absolute power to depose and dethrone rebellious monarchs. It was said to Peter, when he saw the vision of the unclean beasts, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat.” Consequently, the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, has Divine authority to put heretics to death. These are the expositions of infallible Popes themselves, or in one case, perhaps, of Romish Divines of high repute, when they would establish their claims by Scriptural evidence. What are they, in reality, but an affront to the human understanding, when made the basis of a claim so stupendous ; and an instance of the shifts to which falsehood and fraud are driven, when they seek to robe themselves in the garments of truth ?

One solitary text remains, which can afford any plausible ground for the claims of the Roman Church. It is the words of our Lord to his Apostle. “Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my

Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now, besides the serious doubt whether St. Peter was ever at Rome, and the clear evidence that it never was his episcopal see, and above all, the concurrent voice of all Scripture, that Christ, and not Peter, is the true foundation and rock upon which the Church is builded, there is a simpler and more summary reply to this solitary argument of the champions of Rome. In assailing pretended heresy, they commit suicide. They deny their own faith, in the very act of seeking to establish it, and prove themselves heretics and apostates by the plea which they urge in favour of their Church's authority. For what is the profession and vow of every faithful Romanist, in the creed of Pope Pius, which is the symbol of his adherence to the Catholic faith? It is in these words, "I promise that I will never interpret Scripture, save according to the unanimous consent of the Holy Fathers." Do the Fathers, then, unanimously affirm that St. Peter is the rock upon whom the Church is to be built? Quite the reverse. A few of them expound the passage in this way, but the majority, including Chrysostom and Augustine, affirm that the rock is Christ himself, or that confession of his Divine glory which the Apostle had just made. The Romish advocate, who alleges these words as a scriptural ground for the Papal system, violates, therefore, his own solemn creed and promise, and rebels against the Church of Rome in the very act of maintaining its Divine authority.

But the weakness of Popery may be seen, further, in ITS IRRECONCILEABLE HOSTILITY TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. The truths which it still retains are its own complete condemnation. If the everlasting Gospel, revealed in the Scriptures, be a Divine provision for the deepest wants of mankind, and the highest exhibition of the love and wisdom of God, then whatever opposes it, and perverts it into an engine of priestly domination, fights against God himself, and is doomed to sure destruction.

And first, how does Popery deal with the Scriptures, the Divine treasury of the Christian revelation? The command of Christ himself, even to unbelieving Jews, and much more to his disciples, is plain and clear—"Search the Scriptures." An urgent and explicit instruction is given at the close of the first and earliest of the Apostle's letters. "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren." Our Lord repels every assault of the tempter by the same weapon, saying, "It is written." A command and a promise, of the same tenor, is attached even to that most mysterious prophecy, which closes and shuts in the volume of revelation. "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book—Blessed is he that readeth."

How, then, does the Church of Rome obey these instructions of our Lord? In theory, she evades and nullifies them; in practice, she contradicts and defies them. She adds to the word of God a heap of Apocryphal writings. She hides them from the people in an unknown tongue. She wraps them up in the folds of voluminous commentaries, without daring to let their voice be heard alone. She places side by side with them, as of equal or superior authority, an immense mass of written and unwritten traditions, which it would take many lifetimes to explore thoroughly. In practice, she lays aside the thin disguise of these theological evasions, by which she would conceal her enmity to the Word of God. Her priests do not hesitate to brand the Bible, in honest and genuine translations, as the book of the devil. When search was made for it by Mr. Seymour, a few years ago at Rome, not a copy was found accessible to the people. Still later, within a few months, the Bible has been publicly burned by the monks in Ireland, in the open air, and in their chapels at the time of worship, and the organs of Popery justify and applaud the sacrilege; while Francisco and Rosa Madiari are now in the prisons of Tuscany, with the lowest criminal, for no other offence than the private reading of the Word of God.

The first religious duty, taught alike in the Law and the Gospel, is the worship of God alone. This is the first of the ten commandments. "Thou shalt have no other Gods but me." It is repeated solemnly by our Lord in the opening of the Gospel. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The last event recorded in the Scriptures is the refusal, by the angel, of St. John's mistaken homage. "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." In like manner, St. Peter rejects the worship of Cornelius, and St. Paul sternly denounces, as a work of the flesh, the voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, which was already threatening to infect the Church of Christ.

The Church of Rome flies in the face of these Divine commands. She enjoins the worship of the Virgin Mary, and offers solemn litanies to her, as the only hope of the sinner, and the Queen of Heaven. She teaches her followers to worship a host of saints and angels, and even their images, pictures, and relics, the wooden cross, and the wafer in the sacrament. To screen herself from the guilt of idolatry, she has invented a subtle distinction of various modes or degrees of reverence, *latria* to God himself, *dulia* to saints and angels, and *hyper-*

dulia, an intermediate honour, to the Virgin Mother of God. But the words of our Lord, in the temptation, sweep away at once this refuge of lies. The words, "Him only shalt thou serve," are those out of which the figment has been constructed of a worship of *latria*, distinct from that lower worship, which, we are told, saints and angels may lawfully receive. But in what light did the tempter present himself, when he pleaded for worship from the Son of God? Was it as the supreme Divinity, or a Being with absolute and underived authority? Quite the reverse. It is expressly a subordinate worship he claims, as the deputy and vicegerent of the Most High. "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." As a deputy, not as an absolute and supreme power, he claims a relative homage; and that lower worship, which alone he claims, our Lord refuses with righteous indignation. "Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." But the Church of Rome endorses with her approval the Satanic temptation, and condemns those who follow their Lord in refusing all such creature worship, to the prison and the flames.

The Gospel sets before us one way of access to God for the fallen sinner, the Divine mediation of the Son of God. Its message is as simple as it is sublime. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men,—the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." But Popery introduces a host of other mediators. Her Breviary is filled with their virtues and their merits. Her children are taught to look to the Virgin and a countless multitude of patron saints for their way of access to the Almighty. In practice, she has proceeded to a still greater degree of superstition and blasphemy. Pictures have been printed and circulated, under the sanction of her priests, in which two ladders are set up, reaching into heaven. At the top of one ladder is Christ; of the other, the Virgin. Those who strive to ascend the first, are seen falling back into the flames of hell through the inexorable severity of the Judge; but those, who choose the other ladder, are received into heaven, through the grace and intercession of the Virgin. And indeed when the Pope, in his public allocutions, proclaims the Virgin Mary to be his "only hope, and the sole ground of his confidence," how can we be surprised at any excess of blasphemy in the instructions offered by Romish priests to their more superstitious and ignorant followers?

It would be easy to extend this inquiry to all the main elements of

the Christian faith, and to show how flatly Popery is opposed to the Scriptures of truth which it still professes to receive. The Gospel teaches salvation by faith, without the possibility of human merit. The Church of Rome teaches that eminent saints have a stock of merit, beyond their own requirements, which can be made available by indulgences for the remission of other men's sins. The Gospel proclaims that Christ, by his death on the cross, has made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world—a sacrifice which can never more be repeated, and needs no supplement for its perfect efficacy to every believer. The Church of Rome declares that, in the Mass, Christ is offered over and over again by the hands of her priests, to be a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead. The Gospel demands from its disciples a living holiness. The Church of Rome, by her Jesuit casuists, and the whole course of her practical training, teaches men that if they pay the Church dues, and go through the Church forms, and are anointed on their deathbed by a Roman priest, their salvation is secure. The Gospel teaches us that when our Lord instituted the Last Supper, the integrity of the Sacrament was guarded by a special instruction respecting the cup alone. "Drink ye all of it, for this cup is the new covenant in my blood." But the Church of Rome, by her own authority, so late as the fourteenth century, has formally forbidden to the laity what the Lord commanded as their duty and their privilege. The Gospel lays it down as the ordinary qualification of Christian ministers, that they should be "the husband of one wife, having their children in subjection with all gravity." It assigns a distinct reason for this direction, that their rule in their own household, and over their own children, might be a pledge for their ability to govern in the Church of God, which requires, not the harsh discipline of a military chieftain, but all the delicate tenderness of parental love. It adds the further warning, in the same context, of a great apostasy, of which the mark would be, "forbidding to marry." The Church of Rome, with respect to the same class, the Christian ministry, has rejected the rule of the Gospel, and taken upon itself the predicted mark of apostasy, by forbidding marriage to all its priests and religious orders, and to these alone. From the foundation, in the authority of the Scriptures, to the topstone and cornice of the building, in the various details of worship and discipline, the Church of Rome betrays its secret architect, by a systematic opposition to the message of the Gospel.

But the Papal system is weak, not only because its false doctrines and corrupt practices are opposed to the truth which it continues to recognize, but further, because they are inconsistent with each other. No scheme of error can be so skilfully contrived, but it will betray the incoherence of its materials. Its parts will not cleave to one another, like the feet of the great image, in which iron was mixed with miry clay. Many such contradictions might be noticed in the Papal theology, but it will be enough to specify two only—the doctrine of intention, and the unbloody sacrifice.

It is the doctrine, then, of the Church of Rome, that the Mass is an unbloody sacrifice for the living and the dead. That is the term by which its writers commonly describe its nature and efficacy. But if we consult the formularies of the same Church, the doctrine is clearly laid down, that, after consecration, the bread and wine vanish away, and are replaced by the body and blood, the soul and Divinity of the Lord Jesus. In the cup there is no longer a particle of wine, but the blood of the Lord Jesus under the form of wine; and the same blood, by the doctrine of concomitance, is present also in the consecrated wafer. How then can that be an unbloody sacrifice, in which the presence of the blood of our Lord, nay, of the blood as a sacrifice, shed for sinners, is a constant unfailing element? The two doctrines, both taught by the Church of Rome, plainly contradict and destroy each other.

Again, the common argument of Romanists and semi-Romanists against Protestant Christians is based on the visibility of the Church of Christ. They are accustomed to treat with the utmost contempt the explanation of the Catholic Church, as consisting simply of all true believers, an invisible assembly, known to God alone. They appeal to prophecy and promise, to sacred history, and the first institution of the Church, to prove that it is a visible, well defined, ascertainable community; and hence would infer that, unless the Church of Rome is the Catholic Church, the promise of Christ respecting its perpetuity would have entirely failed before the time of the Reformation.

On the other hand, it is the formal decision of the Church of Rome, in the Council of Trent, that the intention of the priest is essential to the validity of every sacrament. There is no baptism, unless the priest intends to baptize, and no transubstantiation, unless he intends to consecrate. If there are ten wafers, and he intends to consecrate only nine, it is even decided that none of them are transubstantiated. The same rule applies to absolution, ordination, and extreme unction.

All is made to depend on the secret purpose in the mind of the ordaining bishop, or consecrating priest.

The Church of Rome, then, after all her boasts, is essentially and completely invisible. Unless we had the faculty of omniscience, to search the hearts of all men, we can never tell who are her baptized members, her sacrificing priests, her ordaining bishops, or whether, after all, she possesses any real Pope, to be her infallible head, and the Vicar of Christ upon earth. Her constitution, by her own decrees, is one immense heap of invisibilities. We cannot tell whether her nominal members are real members of her communion, for if the intention of the priest were wanting, they are still unbaptized heathens. Her priests are no priests, but mere laymen, if the intention was absent in the bishop who pretended to ordain them. Or if his own intention were not wanting, the intention might still be wanting in his ordainer, and so on, through every link of the long ecclesiastical pedigree. The Pope himself is no Pope, but a vain pretender, if intention was lacking in the priest who baptized him, or in the priest who baptized the priest; or in the bishop who ordained the Pope to the priesthood, or in the priest who baptized, or in the bishop who ordained this bishop; and so on in every step upward, through the archbishops and the cardinals, to the very summit of the ladder. From the Pope and the cardinals down to the lowest parish priest, cloistered monk, or begging friar, and the meanest devotee before the shrine of the Virgin, it is uncertainty piled on uncertainty, invisibility heaped on invisibility. The unseen, unknown, undiscoverable intention of some thousands or millions of priests, many of them known to have been secret infidels, is the foundation of the whole edifice; and till this can be certainly known, we can never tell whether the Church of Rome has a real Pope and real Cardinals, real bishops and real priests, and a multitude of real members; or whether the whole is but a huge phantasmagoria of undetected forgeries, where the bishops are no bishops, the priests no priests, the host no host, but mere bread, the baptisms no baptisms, the Christians no Christians, the Church itself no Church, but a chaos of invisibilities, where all that is really visible is a gigantic fraud on its own professed members, and on the credulity of mankind at large. And yet it is this Church, founded and built up, from the base to the topstone, on the invisible intentions of a priesthood, whose claim to the character is itself invisible, which dares to appeal to its own conspicuously visible character, in proof that it justly claims to be the one Catholic Church of Christ.

Another source of weakness in Popery, whenever kings and statesmen are alive to their own duty and interest, is its manifest hostility to the rights of sovereigns. There are times when this truth is forgotten. In the dread of social disorder, the rulers of the earth are sometimes infatuated enough to rely for aid on the crozier of the priest, and the triple crown of the seven hills. But whatever may be its professions in days of weakness, dominant Popery has ever set itself against the dignity and the rights of princes. It has claimed a superiority over them in its own decretals, like the splendour of gold compared to the sordid dulness of lead, or the brightness of the sun, contrasted with the faint and sickly moonbeams. Its professed theory is that both swords, the spiritual and the temporal, belong to the Pope, as the successor of St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ. But sword must be under sword, the greater held by the Pope, to smite with spiritual censures even emperors and kings, the other to be held under him and for him, the sword of temporal jurisdiction. Acting on these principles, Gregory VII. and Innocent III. claimed absolute submission from the emperor and the king of England; Paul IV. pronounced the deposition of Henry VIII., and solemnly proclaimed that all Englishmen were to be the slaves of whoever could overtake them on the broad seas, while Pius V., by the Bull, *Regnans in excelsis*, dethroned Queen Elizabeth, and commanded all her subjects to rebel against her, under peril of their soul's damnation, should they disobey. The Papal Brief of Pius IX. travels in the wake of these well-known precedents. Its silence is as expressive and ominous as their open censures. No authority is recognised by this Vicar of Christ in an heretic sovereign, no Christianity in a heretic Church, established or unestablished. We are mapped out, precisely as a savage island might be, where there was no existing government, but a few heathen savages were wandering through their native forests. In the eyes of the fugitive of Gaeta, and of the Cardinal whom he has sent to govern us by the light of the Canon Law, Queen Victoria is a cypher, and English Churchmen and Dissenters are alike a set of baptized infidels, in whom the sole trace of Christianity is the obligation conveyed, even by heretical baptism, to obey the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome. Once let Popery be dominant, and her Canon Law in full activity, and kings and princes are only drudges and executioners, to carry out her fierce anathemas against all who dare to reject her authority. The priest, in his confessional, sits in the seat of God, and the civil magistrate is turned into his tool and scavenger, to do

the menial and troublesome offices in her favourite work of persecution. Let Popery have its full sway in our own country, and our beloved Queen, whom may God preserve and bless, would either be hurled from her throne, as an obstinate rebel, or degraded into the jailer of every British Madiat, the faggot-bearer to the flames of a new Smithfield. Only let sovereigns read history with open eyes, and the sense of their own interest and honour will make them the foremost protesters against the usurpations of Popery, and the most strenuous opposers of its never-ceasing and subtle machinations.

But if Popery is adverse to the dignity of sovereigns, it is no less opposed to the liberties of the people. This is another source of its moral weakness. The instincts of freedom are deep and strong in the heart of man. Even in their perverted forms, of mere selfwill, when opposed to the claims of conscience and reason, they have had power, from age to age, to make monarchs tremble, and to disturb the peace of nations. But when confined within their just limits, with truth and conscience on their side, their force is almost irresistible. To these rights of conscience, however, as well as to the instincts of true liberty, Popery stands in deadly opposition. Its first principle is the utter prostration of the conscience and understanding before a human authority, which pretends to be infallible; so that Cardinal Wiseman assures us, the man has already ceased to be a Catholic, who begins to inquire into the grounds of his own faith. Wherever Popery prevails, political liberty must droop and wither; while the inner, deeper liberty of the heart, falls down in a swoon at the open door of the confessional, and quickly expires. What freedom can exist, where the first and chief lesson of morals enforced is to practise forms of religion, without understanding them, and to repeat the most mysterious doctrines, like parrots, without the right of inquiring into their evidence or their meaning; where the priest is invested with the Divine attributes, and all the secrets of the heart are to be exposed before him, and to doubt his authority, or dispute his decisions, are visited with instant and severe punishment as the most inexpiable of crimes, while eternal ruin broods over the slave who endeavours to break his chains, and dares either to disbelieve or obey?

Nor ought we to omit, among the sources of weakness which cleave to the Papal system, its habit of unscrupulous and unblushing mendacity. The wisest of men has told us that "lying lips are but for a moment." But Popery from its first rise in pretended miracles

down to the last liquefaction of the blood of Januarius, from its early forgery of Nicene canons down to its latest movement in Ireland for religious equality, has been one enormous structure of deceit and falsehood. We might trace the fact in its long range of pretended miracles, from the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne and the miraculous coat of Treves, to the winking virgin of Rimini, and the apparition to the children at Sallette. We might see it unfolded in the teaching of its casuists, exposed long ago by Pascal with such just severity, but lately canonized anew in the writings of Liguori, in their worst forms of equivocation and falsehood. In its first rise no contrivance was more instrumental in its advancement than the forged donation of Constantine. That monstrous piece of falsehood, of which the Roman Catholics themselves are now ashamed, is closed by these fearful words :—" But if any man shall arrogantly despise this decree, let him suffer the torments of eternal malediction, let him feel the saints of God and princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, his enemies both in this life and in the life to come, and perish in the tortures of the lowest hell, with the devil and his wicked angels." The Church which founded her pretensions upon such a forgery, backed by this impious appeal to God himself in the day of judgment, has reason to tremble at the words of the Psalmist :—" She loved cursing, and it will come to her ; she delighted not in blessing, and it will be far from her. She clothed herself with cursing as with a garment, and it shall come into her bowels like water, and like oil into her bones."

All these various sources of moral weakness, which Popery carries within its own bosom, are aggravated by the plain lessons of history. The events of the Crusades and of the war against the Albigenses, in the middle ages before the Reformation, gave many proofs of the bitter streams that have flowed from the lordly tyranny of the bishops of Rome, and their ever-active ambition. But the course of history, since that great spiritual separation, is still more instructive. What has our own country witnessed during those three centuries ? The fires of Smithfield, the Bull which dethroned Elizabeth, and stirred up her subjects to rebellion ; the Spanish Armada, laden with racks and thumb screws for the recovery of stubborn heretics, the Gunpowder Treason, the Irish massacre, and the reckless and headlong tyranny which cost the latest of the Stuarts his crown. The whole history of England, since the rise of the Reformation, has discovered the relentless hostility of the Vatican against a heretic nation that has disowned its authority ; and it ought to teach every Briton that unless we are

prepared to sacrifice our religion and our liberty at the feet of the Cardinal and his hierarchy of intrusive prelates, the Court of Rome will continue to be our most persevering and deadly foe.

Again, the contrast between Roman Catholic and Protestant States is very remarkable, and full of meaning. What was the condition of Europe in the days of Edward and Queen Mary? The empire of Spain was by far the mightiest power in Europe. The Church of Rome, under the most Catholic king, himself a harsh and gloomy devotee to her cause, had her palmy days of unrestricted supremacy. The Inquisition was in full activity. Jews and Moors were banished, and heretics hunted out with frantic zeal, while *auto-da-fés* sent up the steam of a grateful sacrifice into the nostrils of a triumphant priesthood. Columbus had given to Spain a new world for her conquests, and from Florida almost to Cape Horn, a whole continent lay at her feet, and poured into her lap its choicest treasures. England, in comparison, was a feeble and second-rate power; and when Philip married Queen Mary, it was a very natural fear that it might be swallowed up, as an insignificant province, in the colossal Spanish empire. Three centuries have passed away, and what a change! Spain has lost her colonies, her military renown, her navy, and her population. She now is waterlogged, a mere wreck, on the shores of the Atlantic, which seemed once to be her appointed pathway to universal supremacy, which was covered with her fleets, and bathed, for thousands of miles, the seaboard of her immense and unrivalled possessions. During the last war she escaped with a hard struggle, and almost entirely through British aid, from the entire loss of her national independence. In this busy age of commercial, scientific, and mental activity, her name is seldom heard. She seems almost to have disappeared from the map of Europe.

Britain, on the contrary, from the hour when Elizabeth quenched the fires of Smithfield, and defied the flatteries and menaces of Rome, has risen steadily in power and greatness. In art, science, commerce, political influence, and colonial possessions, she stands now on a pinnacle of national eminence, almost without a rival in the history of the world. Popery, triumphant Popery, has degraded Spain from the height of prosperity and power into a lifeless skeleton of her former greatness. The Bible, in Protestant hands, has exalted our own beloved country to the foremost place among those kingdoms, to which an all-wise Providence has entrusted the future destinies of mankind.

In America the same contrast reappears, and has been described by a French writer with equal eloquence and truth. "Nature," he says, "here invited man by her solitudes to vast thoughts, and kingdoms gigantic as her own. But man remains motionless: an invisible power binds his arms. Three centuries pass, and everything withers around him. In the midst of virgin forests not one new thought starts to life. The morning breath of the universe passes over the forehead of this old man, and cannot revive him. What mean these cradles of empires, Mexico, Rio Janeiro, Buenos Ayres, Lima, which from the first day wear the wrinkles of Byzantium? . . . He sees this unspotted world, and comprehends it not. Sad and motionless he seats himself by the banks of the great rivers, having only recollections in a world which has no past, and the choir of worship from so many new creatures, adds not a single accent, form, or note to his liturgy. The Catholicism of the Council of Trent throws over these nations the dark shadow of Philip II. On the other hand a breath reaches them from France and North America, and torments them with an unextinguishable desire for liberty. Between these two opposite forces, what is the result? These nations are agitated with a hopeless movement. Whatever they do they end by realizing in politics the ideal of their religion, that is to say, absolute power. All that they can accomplish is to change their dictators. We see republics, (and since then the truth extends to the writer's own country,) which issue only in a tightening of their bonds. A new and strange punishment! South America lies under the shadow of a vast manchineel, which distils death upon it; the roots are in a mother continent, and remain invisible."

But there is one source of internal weakness, besides its own contradiction to the Gospel, to the rights of sovereigns, the liberties of the people, and the laws of truth and conscience, and even more decisive than the instructive lessons of bygone history, which assures us, in our conflict with Papal Aggression, of a full and final, though perhaps of a dear-bought victory. Popery is weak, because it is doomed to utter ruin by the repeated prophetic warnings of the Word of God.

The partial spread of the system is indeed still possible. It may seem, for a little season, to recover some of its former power, may boast of its converts, and range kings and princes, and newborn emperors, among its allies. Events seem to point to a short season of its revival, and the warnings of prophecy themselves appear to confirm it. But even in this hour of partial and apparent triumph, we may

trace the continued progress of secret decay. With a few exceptions, and these chiefly of the unhappy perverts who have forsaken our own Church, the adherence of the votaries of Rome to their own system is very shadowy and superficial. It is no longer, in the intelligent classes of European society, the deep and superstitious devotion of the middle ages, but a mere quit-rent paid to a convenient, popular, and long-established superstition, by the spirit of unbelief. It is only a thin land-flood which steals over the surface of nations, even where the Papacy seems to make a rapid progress. It is not a real hold on the mind of the people, and on those master influences of the age which have the practical possession of the hearts of men. The saying of a French wit well expresses the contrast with the power of Popery in former times :—"D'autre fois on l'adorait Dieu : maintenant on l'a dorée." Formerly men worshipped God ; now-a-days they have gilded him. The Church of Rome could once secure the hearty homage of millions on millions of superstitious followers. She is now prized chiefly as a ready and cheap refuge from the outcries of a guilty conscience, and a skilful and practised contriver of shows, musical concerts, and gorgeous processions. No religion like hers for gratifying the taste of countless idlers, when the millions of the people resign themselves to merrymaking and pleasure, on some national holiday. The golden cup, which she holds out gracefully for their acceptance, is full of mixture, and has often a surprising power to intoxicate the hearts of men with a momentary joy.

But behind these noisy accents of popular applause, and the loud bursts of success which are re-echoed from land to land, we may hear, if we will listen heedfully, a still small voice, which whispers fearfully of approaching judgment. Every fresh exhibition of priestly intolerance and pride, where the Church of Rome recovers her power for a moment, wounds and exasperates the general conscience of mankind. The flame of liberty is smothered for a time, only to burst forth with double violence. Fresh deeds of wrong, and renewed acts of oppression, while they provoke the judgments of heaven, provide ready instruments to execute its purposes in the passions of the multitude. The very boasts which we now hear, in all the Papal organs, of recovered strength and growing conquests—their triumphant auguries of a complete resurrection, when Europe shall be once more united under the Vicar of Christ, and the heretic power of Britain, by force or fraud, shall be wrenched from its high position, and forced to bow down once more at the feet of the Pope, and to become a mere

satellite, revolving around the monarch of the seven hills,—these, to thoughtful ears, are the predicted signal of approaching ruin. For what is the last accent which falls on our ears from the harp of prophecy, the key note of many predictions, that warns the Church against the mystic Babylon, who from her seat on the seven hills of Rome holds out her cup of enchantments, to intoxicate the nations?—"Because she hath said, I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow; THEREFORE shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine: AND SHE SHALL BE UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE: FOR STRONG IS THE LORD GOD THAT JUDGETH HER."



